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July 13, 2004

Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Office  
Attn: Northeast NPR-A Planning Team  
222 West Seventh Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599

Dear Planning Team,

I am an environmental expert at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Much of my work focuses on the impacts of climate change - and Alaska is one of the places in the world already experiencing those impacts.

Against this backdrop, I am greatly concerned by any action that (a) makes ecosystems already greatly at risk from climate warming even more vulnerable, and (b) adds more to the cause of anthropogenic climate change.

Opening the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve to further exploration is an action that scores on both these counts.

Please accept my comments regarding your Environmental Impact Statement for the Reserve. I am especially concerned about the impact the Bureau of Land Management's proposal would have on the area around Teshekpuk Lake, one of the most unique and important wetlands in the entire Arctic.

I urge you to adopt Alternative A, the "No Action" alternative, because it would maintain protection for the entire Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area. This extraordinary ecosystem provides critical habitat for molting geese and nesting habitat for Steller's eiders, northern pintails, yellow-billed loons and other species. It also supports a vitally important caribou herd that Alaska natives depend on for their subsistence.

Eighty-seven percent of the northeastern reserve is already open to oil and gas companies for leasing. In the five years since the original 1998 northeast plan, additional information and analyses have been accumulated that point toward significant impacts on fish and wildlife if more of this sensitive area is opened. And as mentioned above, all these impacts simply add to the growing impact of climate change on these species and ecosystems, undermining their ability to adapt to rapid change.

It would be a huge mistake to risk the internationally significant ecological resources of Teshekpuk Lake for a short-term supply of energy, especially when we know that the United States cannot drill its way to energy independence.

Again, I urge you to choose Alternative A, the "No Action" alternative, to protect the reserve's irreplaceable wildlife, wilderness and subsistence values for future generations.

Sincerely,

Susanne C. Moser  
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USA